



**Memphis is a sound, a groove and a rhythm that races through your soul, making it the Home of the Blues and the Birthplace of Rock ‘n’ Roll. On July 5, 1954, Elvis Presley recorded “That’s All Right” at the legendary Sun Studio in Memphis, Tennessee...and rock ‘n’ roll took off. Fifty years later, Memphis, Tennessee will mark the 50th Anniversary of Rock ‘n’ Roll with a yearlong celebration of rock music and the many streams of music that converged in Memphis to create a truly American sound known throughout the world.**

## **Good Places to Eat and Great Entertainment**

### **Reviews by Michael Stabile**

#### **The Little Tea Shop**

69 Monroe Ave., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.525.6000

It’s really not homestyle cooking if the woman who created it isn’t still in the kitchen. At the Little Tea Shop in downtown Memphis, Suhair Lauck is at once behind the counter and in front of the grill, making sure each customer knows what a jewel he or she has walked into. If Ms. Luack hasn’t seen you before, she’s likely to brag that she’s got Memphis’ “best kept secret,” though should you be lucky enough to get in before the lunch rush, you’ll wonder how much of a secret it really is. She’s famous for her porkless turnip greens, but her daily specials, pot roast, roast chicken and gravy, are always accompanied by moist, steaming cornsticks that serve as mop up bread for the jus and gravy.

#### **Top’s Bar-B-Q**

1286 Union Ave, Memphis TN; Tel. 901.725.7527

If only all chains were this perfect. Some locals decry its “vinegary taste,” but those reared on franchises like McDonald’s and Burger King will cry at how delicious a municipal multi-location barbecue can be. It’s nothing like you’ve ever experienced, and certainly isn’t mass-produced. Each Top’s has its own smokestack pumping meaty charcoal air into the surrounding environs. After tasting one of their superb wet pork sandwiches, you’ll know why the gods created white bread (is it a coincidence that the Wonder company is headquartered in Memphis as well?).

#### **Rendezvous Café**

69 Monroe Ave, Memphis TN; Tel. 901.523.2746

For the legions of die-hard dry-rub barbecue fans nothing tops the Rendezvous Café’s pork shoulder ribs. Spicy and dry on the outside, with succulent juicy meat on the inside, these ribs were made to take the Rendezvous’ secret-recipe sauces, hot and spicy or sweet and tangy or a combo of both. The small order may be enough to satisfy one’s immediate craving, but for a few bucks more a large order can always be taken to go. Everyone from the Court Park vagrant to Food & Wine magazine has praised and continues to praise this amazing house of meat.

#### **Grill 83**

79 Madison Ave, The Madison Hotel, Memphis TN; Tel. 901.333.1200

The ultra-chic hotel bar and restaurant is about as far from Memphis as one can get, and still stay within the city limits. Of course, many Memphians would contend that culinary excellence and southern food aren’t mutually exclusive, and they aren’t, but Grill 83 is a step above the barbecue and soul food for which Memphis is justly famous. Take, for example, the excellent stacked crab salad that comes with savory poppy-seed cookies and avocado tempura. Of course, Memphis isn’t Memphis without meat and an excellent selection of beef, fish and game dominate the entrée menu.

### **National Civil Rights Museum**

450 Mulberry St., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.521.9699

Located in the former home of the Lorraine Motel (where, in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated by James Earl Ray), the National Civil Rights Museum traces the history of the African-American freedom movement from the 1600s (when African slaves first rebelled) to modern day struggles. Audio tours and interactive media exhibits help convey the gravity of the situation, but the location and its history provide the greatest emotional kick.

### **Beale Street**

Beale St., btw Front St. and Danny Thomas Blvd., Memphis TN

Beale Street is a sinner's paradise and a savior's Sisyphean nightmare. Each night crowds of tourists and locals alike fill up the bar-lined cobblestone streets. Even for the modern alternative-rocker or the dance hall queen, the blues pouring out of the innumerable clubs is hard to resist. Perhaps even harder to resist is the carnival-esque atmosphere (and beer in to-go cups) that characterizes the all-night long party.

### **Graceland Mansion**

3734 Elvis Presley Blvd., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.332.3322

No visit to Memphis is really complete without a visit to Elvis' 14-acre home. Tours last about an hour and provide an audio accompaniment to the King's kitschy, shag-carpeted home. Of particular note and interest are the plush and colorful 'jungle' room, the '60s kitchen (where the King's peanut butter and banana sandwiches were prepared almost daily), the trophy room (filled with Elvis' gold record collection), and the gravesite of the Presley family. See where little Lisa Marie learned to ride horses! See Elvis' extravagant and sweat-stained concert outfits and jewelry! Perhaps the greatest attraction at the Mansion, however, is the passionate crowd of tourists themselves, coming to pay tribute Rock and Roll's original King.

### **Mud Island River Park**

125 N. Front St., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.576.7241

Take the monorail from the eastern bank of the Mississippi to this river island where the view of the Memphis skyline is only one of the many attractions. A to-scale replica of the Mississippi River from Cairo, IL to New Orleans, LA charts the river's course and provides important information about the ecological, geographic and historical aspects of the largest river in North America. The Mississippi River Museum located in the park covers the cultural history of the Lower Mississippi River Valley, including exploration, early settlements and river engineering. Mud Island is also the permanent home of the famous Memphis Belle warplane, the first to return home from WWII battle with no casualties.

### **The Pink Palace**

3050 Central Ave., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.320.6320

Those non-Southern visitors to Memphis may not know the still thriving Piggly Wiggly grocery store chain, but a tour of the Pink Palace provides so much information about founder Clarence Saunders' first self-service grocery store. Architectural fans marvel at the pink Georgian marble façade that gives this mansion its colorful name. A history of the chain, as well as exhibits on local Memphis geography and an IMAX theater show.

### **Sun Studio**

706 Union Ave., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.521.0664

Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and others have recorded (and in some cases, been discovered) at this Memphis institution. Passers-by may not notice the modest brick building, though the large Gibson guitar hanging outside the front of the wedge-shaped studio is hard to miss. Inside, visitors are offered a tour of some of the studio's actual recording rooms and weary travelers can nosh at the vintage soda fountain and restaurant (best shakes in the city) and shop for Sun Studio memorabilia and recordings.

### **Pyramid Arena**

Riverside Dr. and 2nd St., Memphis TN; Tel. 901.521.7909

A 32-story sports arena and auditorium might look odd in a mid-South city, but given that Memphis is named after an Egyptian city and early settlers considered the Mississippi River the Nile of America, it isn't that strange. Home of the Memphis Grizzlies and the University of Memphis basketball teams, the Pyramid Arena also uses its 21,000-seat auditorium for rock and country performances as well as holiday and family shows.